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ABSTRACT

A study focused on the effect of welfare reform legislation on literacy or social service providers and families participating in the programs. Program staff and participants in Wisconsin and California were surveyed and interviewed to determine how welfare reform impacted what they do programmatically or personally. Findings indicated receipt of public assistance has had an enormous impact on the ways in which these family units are viewed or treated in American society, with media, legislative body, and public opinion being used to castigate them for being in need of assistance. In states like Wisconsin, programs and counties took the position that no one could receive public assistance and developed a program of services that allows the social welfare office to give them medical and food subsistence, assistance finding work, and help maintaining a job; but they cannot just receive assistance. In California, programs were tailored to focus on short-term training leading to work with required performance of community work or service to continue receiving public assistance. These two compelling factors were uncovered: the rhetoric about those on welfare and how they abuse or misuse funds has led to development of programs that penalize, not aid, families in poverty; and there are conflicting goals between the educational and training realities of those receiving welfare and those engaged in service implementation. (Contains 21 references.) (YLB)

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Welfare Reform, Work, and Literacy: Issues of Gender, Class, and Race

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Just who should receive welfare assistance and how long should they be entitled to receive it, especially in an economy that is booming? In what ways has public assistance affected families? What role do social service agents and adult education practitioners play in assisting women, men, and children under the new welfare reform initiative? Since the enactment of the Social Security Act over 65 years ago, many attempts have been made to change the way relief-giving is issued in the United States. Laws have been enacted to determine who should be entitled to relief based on gender, moral, and ethnic/racial, as well as, economic grounds. This study examines the ways in which welfare reform and literacy have become entangled in the resolution of these issues. It also addresses the ways in which race, class, and gender have affected welfare reform measures in the United States. Program staff and participants in Wisconsin and California were surveyed and interviewed to determine how the reformation of the welfare system has impacted what they do programmatically or personally. Even as President Clinton and others assert that welfare has come to an end as we know it, programmers and those affected by welfare reform – men and women, suggest that the welfare system has not ended, but has gone underground. While there are many successful programs, those leaving welfare are not faring significantly any better than before. Instead of social service and literacy programs working more closely, they are still at odds over what works and what doesn't. Moreover, we now know that a significant number of families are more torn apart and more impoverished than ever before. Fathers are being incarcerated and mothers and children are the victims.

For those individuals and families living in poverty because they lost a job, are unable to find work, or lack the basic and technical skills needed to perform work tasks, the two legislative measures that have had a significant impact on their lives in the last five years in terms of education, training and work, are the Workforce Investment Act (1998) and The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (1996). These measures were created to achieve two goals. The first goal is to help those receiving state or federal public assistance achieve self-sufficiency while the second is to provide training (education) and or skills to eliminate relief-giving by the government and eradicate illiteracy – all as we now know it. While both these acts have had some import as to how services are delivered and to whom they are delivered the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act has had the most dire consequences for those receiving public assistance. The Workforce Investment Act has had the most impact on service delivery and procedures for guiding people with limited basic skills and technical abilities into work situations. This paper will primarily focus on the effect the welfare reform legislation has had on literacy or social service providers and those families that are currently participating in these programs. The Workforce Investment Act will be discussed to examine how these services, provided through this measure, impacts upon those receiving or providing services to those receiving public assistance.

Historical Context

Since the enactment of the Social Security Act that established the welfare system in the United States in 1935, debate has occurred over who deserves to receive public assistance, as well as, over how to maintain or sustain the funding needed to serve those to which this law was intended. While the original intent of this legislation was, and, still remains, to provide a national insurance plan for the aged and those who have difficulty finding work; it also established categorical grants in aid programs that have been the target of much

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debate, especially during times of economic decline[1]. Categorical grants include a) assistance to dependent children, commonly referred to as "mother's pension plan;" b) maternal and child health; c) care for those physically crippled; d) for those children that were neglected in rural areas; e) vocational rehabilitation; f) pension for the blind; and g) public health (Bell, 1965; Douglas, 1936). Of those categorical grants in aid programs that have received the most vocal and perhaps negative attention, the category which references the "mother's pension plan;" seems to have caused both those in government and the general public the most consternation.

Initially this section of the legislation was seen as a stop gap measure until a woman either got married or her children left home, which would then give her an opportunity to seek out employment for herself. During the 1940s and 1950s in particular, it was thought that the woman's role in the United States was to care for her children, while the husband's role was to make financial provisions for the family. Given this thinking, legislators allocated federal and state dollars for relief-giving to families without fathers in the home. Services were provided to women who did not have the financial resources needed to maintain their families. The children of these women were deemed *as deserving or needy*, and were therefore were entitled to benefits, because they lacked the financial resources needed for self-sufficiency. The *needy* in this case were considered as being anyone whose father or guardian had died due to war, or prior to the child turning 18 years of age, or was mentally or physically incapacitated. At the time of its inception, this generally meant that government aid could be provided to any female of European ancestry. Even though it was never articulated in the legislation that relief-giving was meant for any one given group or race, through the subsequent legislative parlance it became clear as to who should or could receive public assistance.

So instead of explicitly stating that only women of European ancestry would be entitled to this form of assistance, legislators began enacting legislation that would make it more difficult, however not impossible, for others to obtain government assistance. Much discussion centered on which families or women would or should receive assistance based on their ethnicity. Although the term "family" was rarely used in reference to single parent(s) with children when the parent had not been married, the term is used here to suggest that although single parent units were not considered families, they did indeed constitute a family unit. A family in this instance is considered to be any unit in which there is a caretaker responsible for one or more individuals. In fact the period between the 1940s –1950s became a time in which issues concerning race, morality, and eligibility were at the forefront of the dialogue, and the numbers of those receiving it were in the background (Sheared, 1998).

The major questions tended to center around issues of deservedness; however, issues of race, gender and class began to emerge as the subtext. As the "suitable home," "substitute parent," and "seasonal employment," laws in the early 1940's evolved, the discourse began to change. The dialogue shifted to the question of whom or for how long someone should receive public assistance. It became increasingly clear that assistance was intended for some and not for others. However, the others were becoming more difficult to discern because the needs had changed.

Beginning in the 1950s a shift began to occur. It appeared that more and more men were leaving their families not because of death, war, or mental/physical incapacity. They began leaving in order that their families could receive some financial relief. Jobs became scarce as more and more companies began to turn to technology, rather than mechanical labor. Families, and men in particular, began to find themselves out of work. Additionally, as the service industry began to change from labor provided in the home (housekeepers, child or day labor) to services provided in offices and businesses, more women, African American women in particular, began to find it difficult to obtain work. These two factors led to the legislation of the Unemployed Parent: AFDC program (1961), which was established in approximately 25 states while more women of color sought relief to help their families outside of the home. While legislators specifically articulated their concern about fathers leaving the home, they did not overtly discuss what was happening to non-white women who were now beginning to obtain aid. Rather than public aid becoming a stop gap measure for those who could work, it had become for some, a way of survival. Clearly something had to be done. However it was unclear as to what or how the government should approach the problem. As the economic and political dynamics

[1] According to Piven and Cloward (1971) relief-giving goes in economic cycles. It further helps to delineate and to determine what type of work is done and by whom (Piven & Cloward, 1982). In other words, provision of relief differentiates class and determines who will perform what jobs, thereby ultimately maintaining social and economic inequity within a given society.

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began to shift, legislators focused their attention on ways in which they could decrease who should or would be entitled to government assistance, as the way to solve their problem concerning who deserved it.

The Issue/Problem

Since the enactment of categorical grants in aid funding, both those in the private and public sectors have had difficulties determining what the issues are related to relief-giving. Questions loomed on multiple levels. For instance, who should receive welfare assistance and for how long should welfare assistance be given to those families in need? Should public assistance be given to families that consisted of both the father and mother, or just be given only to those parents or guardians that were single due to the reasons cited above? And if assistance should be given to those who were unwed, how long should it be given and just what was and is the government's moral and legal role in financially providing for, or persuading women to marry or remarry in order to provide both financially, personally, and socially for their children? These are just a few of the many questions or factors that have arisen and received either media or legislative attention since the enactment of this legislation over 65 years ago.

Gatekeepers of the Illusion: It's the "Race Thang"

While in the beginning, federal and state funding for those on welfare was expressly earmarked primarily for women and families of European ancestry, over the course of its 65-year history, women of other ethnic/language groups, men, and varying family units began to receive assistance. The primary reasons that people could use to obtain this assistance were loss of job, inability to secure a job, or loss of a primary family member who was responsible for providing the economic security within a particular family unit. In the beginning it seemed quite clear just who deserved public assistance, but as more and more people began to be in need for varying reasons, the more complicated it became to discern who should receive this form of aid. For instance, given that women of color, African Americans in particular, were expected to work outside the home in the fields or as housekeepers, there was little evidence of them being considered for public assistance (Allen, 1990; Beal, 1975; Harley 1990; Lewis, 1990; Malveaux, 1985; Woody, 1989). However, over the years job needs shifted or changed because of the deterioration of a market economy driven by manual or hand labor and as a result of companies/businesses and individual employers relocating to suburban areas and/or foreign countries. Women of color, as well as others, began to turn to the state and federal government to assist them in maintaining some form of income in order to care for their families.

A secondary factor that helped to change the way public assistance was given, occurred as a result of men having to leave their homes so that they could receive some form of government aid. As these men of all races began to leave their homes in order for their families to receive some assistance, legislation was enacted that allowed some men, as well as their entire family units, to obtain assistance.

The End of the Friendly Face

A third key factor that led to the welfare reform act of 1996 was the supposed safety net that those on welfare had. This safety net had led to an influx of welfare dwellers and people who did not work, even though they could and should. Moreover, through images in the media of these individuals (primarily African American and non-white women) being presented as shiftless, defrauders of the government, as well as lazy, it became quite clear to all that drastic changes needed to occur. In order to get these people to work and not rely on the government for continued subsistence, the government had to stop being so welcoming. The question had been answered. These individuals did not deserve public assistance because after all, they were shiftless, lazy and cunning, as well as quite able bodied and capable of performing work. They did not need to be taught basic literacy skills or receive more or a better education. They did not need to be given a handout; they needed to be *put out or off* the public assistance rolls. They could and should work. For those who found themselves out of work or those who had been on welfare and needed to find work, a timeframe of five years was imposed to help people move off the welfare rolls.

Remediation and literacy skills were no longer viewed as the primary medium to assist these people move from welfare. The only thing that would help them was finding work and acquiring a work ethic that would make them self-sufficient. Literacy programs and social service programs began to focus more on job

skills and workplace learning, rather than on basic skills. While on the social service side those receiving the services were still viewed as clients, on the job skills or training side, these people began to be viewed as consumers of services. The Workforce Investment Act picked up on that theme and as a part of its mission the following elements became the focus for both literacy providers and trainers:

- Training and employment programs must be designed and managed at the local level, where the needs of businesses and individuals are best understood.
- Customers must be able to conveniently access the employment, education, training, and information services they need at a single location in their neighborhoods.
- Customers should have choices in deciding the training program that best fits their needs and the organizations that will provide that service. They should have control over their own career development.
- Customers have a right to information about how well training providers succeed in preparing people for jobs. Training programs will provide information on their success rates.
- Businesses will provide information, leadership, and play an active roll in ensuring that the system prepares people for current and future jobs. (U.S. Department of Labor, September 1998)

One stop programs and services evolved, in which social service agents, literacy providers, community colleges and others began working collaboratively to aid those on welfare, as they moved from welfare to work.

The reforms or measures that were instituted beginning with the laws enacted in the 1940s to the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Act in 1988 were all aimed at removing people ultimately from welfare. However, it wasn't until The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity legislation was enacted in 1996 that welfare ended as we had come to know it. Up until 1996, all those welfare reform measures or their correlative legislative measures, provided individuals with those basic job or literacy skills required in order to compete for entry or mid-level jobs that were more competitive based on the skills and education possessed by the recipient.

Theoretical Framework and the Purpose of the Study

Murphy and Johnson (1998) conducted a national study on what literacy programs were doing in light of the recent welfare reform legislation. In this study they identified eight programs from across the United States that they believed had been able to work with families on welfare in spite of its primary emphasis on work and not on education. One of these programs was contacted and I interviewed the administrator, teachers, and social service agents, as well as attended local collaboration meetings. Other studies have been done which highlight what or how those on welfare are fairing or have faired as a result of the welfare reforms that were implemented (Handler & Hasenfeld, 1997; Hayes & Way, 2000; Murray, 1994). Studies have also been done on whether welfare reform initiatives really end welfare or poverty (Cottingham & Ellwood, 1989; Morris & Williamson, 1986, 1987). Studies like this tend to focus on welfare, literacy/training, and poverty as being the major intervening factors, which if addressed might lead to ending poverty or illiteracy in the United States. Even though these studies tend to address gender, because the group members are primarily female; they often fail to critically reflect on the ways in which the body politic has used gender issues, for instance, as a way to devalue the work women do in their homes.

I, therefore, contend that while an understanding of poverty, literacy/training, and welfare is important, failure to acknowledge the ways in which race, class, and gender have shaped the discourse, will only lead to the continued perpetuation and marginalization of those receiving public assistance (Sheared, 1998; Sheared et al., 2000). An example of how this has evolved in the United States can be described through the use of media images and their role in perpetuating or marginalizing those receiving public assistance. For instance, even though the data suggests that a significant number of those on welfare are white, the image that is often presented in print and visual media is often of someone that is non-white (Sheared, 1998). These images which appear in commercials as well as in news copy, talk about and refer often to the person's:

- lack of basic or technical skills,
- difficulties with leaving impoverished communities,
- inability to find work and maintain jobs,

- fathers not being in the home,
- lack of self-esteem.

While this media view on the surface might send the message that if we help them achieve the skills needed, they might become economically self-sufficient, it rarely generates the kind of response needed to create social change in the established power relationships in society. Rather than creating a better understanding, these types of images tend to promote what Wallace (1990) termed as the "other of the other." It is a phenomenon in this case, in which the negative-image that is presented through the media is then projected unto and accepted by those who are in similar situations. In other words, the image you give me is the one that I now believe to be true, rather than what I know to be true.

So, even though it might be important that the public understand the plight of these individuals, rarely do these kinds of images lead the mass public to fully understand the problems these families face. Instead of generating a fuller understanding, these media images often support negative reactions, as these people are viewed as being capable of working, yet they are not. And since they aren't working, then they must be just shiftless and lazy. So, without ever saying it explicitly, the negative image of Black women, living in poverty and not in control of their lives is projected onto the mass public. In this example, even though issues of race, gender, and class are interwoven, and clearly affect how those on welfare are viewed or treated in research and in resultant legislation, rarely are these factors critically analyzed in a way that might lead to really changing the resultant power relations that have been established.

As a way to begin generating a discourse around issues of gender, class, and race, Collins (1990, 1991) described the ways in which an Afrocentric feminist epistemology can evoke an understanding of the meanings that people give to their lives. My study attempts to incorporate this framework as a way to begin a dialogue around the complexities of welfare reform, literacy, work, and families receiving or effected by public assistance. In the study I conducted on welfare reform (Sheared, 1992; Sheared et al., 2000) the issues of race, gender, and class were addressed in relation to how those on welfare are marginalized as a result of the both federal and state legislation. In the 1992 study I concluded that even though the language used by those involved in reforming welfare appears to be concerned about the well being of those in the margins, it in fact is not. The language or rhetoric used was just another means to maintain control and power over people living in poverty. In other words, the act of reforming the welfare system in this country was not intended to really bring people into the workforce. For if that were so, work that paid above minimum wage, as well as job location would be a large factor in helping people move from welfare to work and on to self-sufficiency.

Data Collection and Analysis

The welfare reform measures initiated during the early 1980s were in large based on the Greater Avenues for Independence which utilized community work and service as a means for holding those on welfare accountable for taking care of their families. During the debates concerning welfare reform in 1988, one of the recommendations from President Reagan's task forces on welfare reform was that the governance of and determination of what process should be used to eliminate welfare should reside at the state level. In the early 1990s the state of Wisconsin began experimenting with various models to help people move from welfare to work. The program that I visited was one of the first programs to implement the one-stop shop model to address the welfare problem. Wisconsin has successfully moved over 80% of those on welfare to work situations.

The intent of this study was initially to provide a historical analysis of the welfare reform and adult literacy legislation in the United States, as well as provide a comparative analysis of two states in particular. Particular attention was given to Wisconsin and California, because these states had often been viewed by legislators and many policy makers/analysts as implementing or developing programs that were the most successful at removing women and others from public assistance. In fact, many of the most recent welfare reform initiatives were modeled, at least in part, after the reform measures instituted in both Wisconsin and California. These two states, in essence, have played a significant role in transforming the way we view the welfare structure and its function in society.

Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in Oakland, California and Madison and Wautoma, Wisconsin, at a community college, community based organization, and social service agency. In addition to this I attended a Workforce Investment Act Informational meeting in San Francisco. I visited a

fatherhood program in Baltimore and met with Vivian Gadsden at the University of Pennsylvania to interview her about the fatherhood initiatives that have emerged across the United States.

A total of 75 surveys were sent to programs in California (25 responded) and three programs in Wisconsin. Interviews were conducted with adult literacy providers, social worker/administrators, and fathers who had been incarcerated for not paying child support. Data from surveys have been tabulated and data from interviews are being coded, categorized and analyzed.

Specific Questions that this Study Addresses

The following questions were used as a framework to guide this study:

- Who should receive welfare assistance and how long should they be entitled to receiving it, in an economy that is booming?
- In what ways has public assistance affected families?
- What role do social service agents and adult education practitioners play in assisting women, men, and children under the new welfare reform initiative?

Findings

"Being on welfare" impacts fathers, mothers, and children, in other words, families. It does not matter if fathers are in or outside of the home or whether mothers are married or unwed, or if children are living with their biological or custodial guardian. The receipt of public assistance has had an enormous impact on the ways in which these family units are viewed or treated in American society. Ironically, this very system which was built to help those most in need, has generated a body politic that uses media, legislative body, and public opinion to castigate them for being in need of assistance. Rather than being seen as a positive source and force for helping people get on their feet, the public welfare system has become a source of contention in the political, economic, and moral arenas. While those individuals receiving this assistance are resultantly labeled *shiftless, lazy, and cunning*.

The overriding solution to these ills has been that these people must get jobs. Ironically, the reason that many have ended up receiving public assistance is that they were unable to find work that would support them and their families. Finding work then, is the key to these individuals turning their lives around and ultimately, becoming self-sufficient. While this is the answer, how this can be achieved has been a mystery for politicians, social scientists, educators, and others. Ever since the public assistance program was instituted in the United States, policies and or programs have been added or removed based on the fact that those receiving public assistance needed to find work.

Even though many attempts have been made to reform the welfare system, as we had come to know it, the most recent reform legislative acts initiated in 1988 and 1996, seemed to have been the ones that generated the most dialogue. These two reform measures were aimed at moving people from welfare to work through a variety of means. The legislation in 1988, Job Opportunities for Basic Skills (JOBS), focused on basic education as a precursor to work, along with a host of other services that would enable individuals to become economically self sufficient (Sheared, 1998). However a dramatic shift seemed to have occurred between 1988 and 1996. People weren't leaving the welfare rolls; instead more and more people were being added to them. Some of those that had participated in the JOBS program had found work, but a large majority had not. Even though the average length of stay on welfare assistance is three to five years, a significant number seemed to be still relying on public assistance as a basic form of survival.

And in spite of the fact that the economy was and is booming for some, people continue to turn in significant numbers to the public assistance rolls. Poverty rates continue to increase and the average amount of income per family is quite dismal. The national poverty threshold in the United States for a family of four is $16,036. In places like California it is even less. How then can we end the dependence on welfare and thereby increase one's ability to become economically sufficient?

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) has replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children at the national level. At the local levels, like California and Wisconsin, programs have changed their names and their focus to CALWorks and Work2 (W-2), respectively. The primary goal of these programs is to move people from welfare to work. How they do that varies from state to state. Even though

states are allowed a significant amount of flexibility in how they develop programs, the goal is to remove people from the welfare rolls within five years. This means that anyone who was receiving public assistance prior to the enactment of this legislation, has only two to three years in some instances, and those who began receiving public assistance after the law was enacted, have five years.

In states like Wisconsin programs and counties have taken the position that no one will be able to receive public assistance. They now have a program of services that allows the social welfare office to give them medical and food subsistence, assistance finding work, and help maintaining a job. According to an administrator that was interviewed, individuals are given support to pay bills, purchase work clothes, pay rent or perhaps even purchase a car (on a limited basis). However, they cannot just receive assistance. They can participate in a literacy program or vocational college on a limited basis, as is needed for them to obtain necessary skills to perform their work. In California, programs have been tailored to focus on short-term training leading to work and they must perform some community work or service in order to continue receiving public assistance. California adopted restrictions that allow the individual to receive only 18 months of cash-aid. Adult recipients must enter into a welfare to work agreement plan; and as of July 1999 they must spend a total of 35 hours per week in work related situations (Sheared, et al., 2000). After 60 months, the employable family member is removed from the cash assistance roll, although the dependent can still receive some form of cash-aid. Both these programs are seen as being successful by the federal government. As a result of the success each state has had in decreasing the numbers of individuals on welfare, each state will receive a cash reward for the state.

Irrational Bureaucracy

From the President to state Governors to others in administrative positions espousing the worth of the welfare to work programs, there has been much discussion about the significant decrease in the welfare rolls and how people, for the first time, are being placed in work situations. While there have been significant decreases, there is research being conducted that suggests that these changes are minimal and in some case harmful to families. Not much, of course, is being said by the administration as they discuss what has happened to the massive numbers who have been removed from the welfare rolls. But anecdotal success stories abound in the print and visual media.

To date there are two compelling factors that have been uncovered in this study. First, the rhetoric about those on welfare and how they abuse or misuse funds has led to the development of programs that penalize families in poverty, rather than aid them. For instance, fathers who can not find work or who have not paid child support because they do not make enough money to support themselves, let alone their families, are now being incarcerated. In a focus group with fathers and individual discussions with them, they talked about how resentful they were about how the government penalized them because they could not find work and pay child support. More importantly, they talked about their resentment towards the women who were the mothers of their children for which they were now being incarcerated. In interviews with teachers and service providers, each recounted situations in which fathers with limited resources were now being penalized through incarceration. So now, not only were the kids not being cared for because one of the parents was incarcerated and the other was out performing community service or working in a minimum wage job, but families were being torn apart.

Second, there really are conflicting goals between the educational and training realities of those receiving welfare and those engaged in the implementation of services. While education is no longer a primary first step to getting people off welfare, most programs and agencies do have participants engaged in "training" or workshops that should help them improve their work skills. In some cases even though they might need some assistance with their reading and math skills, they are now being told that they can do this while they work, but not before they get work. Much of the training that is currently being conducted however, is still being given to adult education programs, community colleges, and community based organizations (Sheared et al., 2000).

Impact

This project naively began as a two-year study aimed at comparing the ways in which the latest welfare reform and adult literacy legislation/initiatives utilized or effected those women on public assistance to get off welfare

and obtain work in California and Wisconsin. Initially, I planned to conduct a legislative history of each legislative initiative and interview literacy providers, public assistance social workers, and administrators in order to determine how those responsible for administering these initiatives were interpreting their responsibilities for implementing these programs. Additionally this study was aimed at determining how these informants viewed the legislation in light of the needs of the women who received public assistance in their programs. Surveys were sent or given to program providers and interviews were conducted with key informants in Wisconsin and California. As data began to emerge, it became quite clear that how these informants viewed their role and what they did based on their understanding of the legislation only provided a hollow glimpse into what was really happening to those women, men, and children or families receiving public assistance.

As I began to look more closely at this phenomenon, I began to realize that the usage or impact of welfare reform for literacy programs and those receiving public assistance had multiple layers. Layers that a study on usage and impact could only, at best, naively address. The study itself can not or should not focus solely on evaluating the use of adult education or basic literacy programs for those receiving public assistance.

While it can be argued that education is a critical link for those that have moved to economic self sufficiency in the United States, it is clear the reason that many are currently receiving welfare is because they can not find jobs that pay wages to support their families. Can it be argued then that if we help or force people to find work that the welfare system's problem in the United States will end as we know it? So, what then is the answer? Is it work first, or is it education and then work?

For the most part legislators have come to the conclusion that work first is the answer. The most recent welfare initiative is evidence of this. Even with this, legislators have made sure that training, however, not education (as we knew it) is still provided to help people prepare for the world of work. So, if we are to end welfare, as we know it, what then is the role of educational agencies and programs in welfare reform?

In many instances these training programs have been relegated to Adult Basic Education programs. These programs have received funding through a multiple number of sources, such as the Job Training Partnership Act (job training), Work Incentive Act (one stop programs), and Adult Education Act (adult literacy and General Education Development).

As more and more individuals are being forced into work situations as a result of the welfare reform programs across the country, adult educators and other involved in basic skills (reading, writing and work) training must begin to find ways to serve what some have considered the most difficult to teach and reach. They cannot continue to think, however, of work as any job. They must begin to think about work in relation to what it means or will take for women, women of color, men, and their families to gain power and control over their lives and their communities.

The analysis presented in this paper is just the beginning. Ultimately, this study should help provide adult basic education providers (instructors and administrators) with information about the welfare reform and its intent towards moving people (white and non-white women and men) from welfare to work via education or training. Moreover, as they develop programs and strategies to aid this population, they can do so based on an understanding of the intent of the legislation and its subsequent need to maintain rather than change the power arrangements in society. With the collection of other data, we will learn more about the ways in which those implementing these programs are viewing these changes and the role that race, class, and gender play in helping us understand these dynamics.

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